



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Issue 118 – July 24, 2006

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

During our Governor's Conference on Tourism, AOT announced the launch of our new consumer Web site at www.ArizonaGuide.com. I hope that all of you have had the chance to visit this new site and explore some of the new features that we have available. I'm very excited that we were able to update our look and feel with more intuitive, easy-to-use information, and I hope that you spread the word about this amazing resource for visitors. AOT has worked with statewide chambers of commerce and convention and visitors bureaus to gather information to populate each section, including details about hotels, restaurants and activities. The site also has a searchable calendar of events, an itinerary builder, travel deals and frequently asked questions about our great state. In addition, AOT redesigned the business-to-business portion of the site at www.azot.gov, linked as The Agency on www.ArizonaGuide.com. This site has research information and latest industry news, as well as details on AOT's programs and projects. AOT is committed to providing you with the resources you need to promote Arizona and grow the already record-breaking tourism industry, and we hope that these two newly remodeled sites provide you with the necessary tools for success.

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Rural Tourism Development Grant Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2007

The Rural Tourism Development Grant Program (RTDGP) guidelines for fiscal year 2007 are now available. The primary objective of the competitive grant program is to provide coordinated funding for tourism related infrastructure projects. The funding amount for FY 07 is \$697,000. AOT has added \$197,000 of unallocated TEAM grant funds. These funds assist rural economic development through tourism to strengthen the regional and local economies and expand tourism in rural and Tribal communities throughout Arizona. The primary function of the infrastructure project must be tourism development and the project must be designed to initiate economic growth and enhance future tourism development. Applications are available on AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov under the Grants section. Applications must be postmarked and/or hand-delivered to the Arizona Office of Tourism no later than 3 p.m. Friday, August, 18, 2006.

AOT Tours Southern Arizona and the White Mountains

Following the 2006 Governor's Conference on Tourism, the Travel Industry Marketing and Media Relations Divisions, along with AOT's International Trade and PR Representatives from the UK, Germany, Mexico and Japan, toured parts of Southern Arizona and the White Mountains Region. During this four-day familiarization tour, the group visited the following attractions: Euro Fresh Farms, Discovery Park, the Morenci Mine, Hannagan Meadow, Casa Malpais Archaeological Park, the Renee Cushman Art Museum, the Little House Museum, Lyman Lake State Park, Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area, Hon Dah Resort and Casino Conference Center, Fort Apache, Besh Ba Gowah, Cobre Valley Center for the Arts and Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park. Many thanks to the all of the hosts in Willcox, Safford, Morenci, Alpine, Pinetop, Springerville, Eagar, Fort Apache, Globe and Superior. If you would like more information about this tour, please contact Kristy McKinnon at 602-364-3696 or kmckinnon@azot.gov.

Trippin' with AOT

AOT On the Road: UK Sales Mission

AOT will carry out a sales mission to the UK from September 10-16, 2006. The week-long mission will target five cities in Scotland and England and will be made up of product meetings and/or destination trainings at the offices of key tour operators, followed by themed evening functions for area travel professionals. The proposed cities are: Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, Peterborough and London. The purpose of the mission is to increase Arizona awareness and help maintain a strong presence in this

important and competitive market. The cost to participate is \$1,500. Please contact Hylton Fothergill for further information at 602-364-3706 or hfothergill@azot.gov.

Brochure Distribution Opportunity

The Arizona Office of Tourism is participating in La Cumbre, the premier travel industry conference for the sales and marketing of travel to the United States from Latin America on September 7-9, 2006. The event features a structured, computer-matched marketplace that enables buyers and suppliers to meet during scheduled appointments. Approximately 500 buyers and 120 press members from throughout Latin America will attend this event. Barbara Jackson, AOT's Mexico representative will attend on AOT's behalf. If you are looking for a cost-effective method to reach this important market, there is the opportunity to have your brochure distributed at the show. Because this is an appointment-based show we only need 50 brochures for distribution. Please contact Kristy McKinnon for more information at 602-364-3696 or kmckinnon@azot.gov.

Industry News

Marriott to Ban Smoking from all Rooms

Lodging giant Marriott International today will announce it is banning smoking in every room of its 2,300-plus hotels in the U.S. and Canada, in an effort to extinguish an increasingly common source of guest complaints--the smell of lingering cigarette smoke. More than 90 percent of guest rooms in Marriott's U.S. and Canadian system are already nonsmoking. But now, smoking will be banned in not only the remaining rooms but also public spaces, such as restaurants, bars, meeting rooms and employee work areas. Marriott's new policy will apply to all 10 of its brands, from the luxurious Ritz-Carlton chain to the more economical Courtyard brand to the extended-stay Residence Inn. Guests who sneak a smoke could face a cleanup fee of between \$200 and \$300, plus additional charges for any lost revenue if the room is taken out of service. (Page D1, Wall Street Journal)

Global Tourism Spending Now \$2 Billion A Day

An estimated \$682 billion was spent abroad by tourists in 2005 – up \$49 billion or 3.4 percent from the previous year. If spending on foreign passenger transport of \$130 billion is added, the total export spend is more than \$800 billion. This represents some 6 percent of global export of all goods and services reports Airline Travel News. "Visitor spending continues its strong overall growth" said UNWTO Secretary General Francesco Frangialli "contributing substantially to global services exports and particularly to the overall trade balances of developing economies. Africa's 7.8 percent increase is a significant success story." (Marketing & Tourism Trends, 7/14)

Phoenix Convention Center

Phase One of the Phoenix Convention Center expansion opened this past weekend, clearing the way for clients to experience the 156,000-square-foot facility. The unveiling of the West Building signifies the completion of Phase One at the site of the \$600 million convention center expansion. The West Building of the center combines state-of-the-art technology and amenities with elegance and comfort, according to the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau. (Special to Travel Advance)

International Visits Up 22 Percent in April

The Commerce Department says 3.9 million international visitors traveled to the U.S. in April, an increase of 22 percent over April 2005. The double-digit growth compensates for the March decline in arrivals, likely due to the seasonal shift in the Easter holiday period from March 2005 to April 2006. Visitation to the U.S. for the first four months of this year is up 6 percent compared to 2005. Overseas arrivals, excluding Canada and Mexico, increased 10 percent over April 2005. Canadian visitation grew 15 percent in April and is up 7 percent for the first four months of 2006. Arrivals from Mexico among those traveling to interior U.S. points were up 131 percent over April 2005 and are up 32 percent for the first four months of this year. Details at 202-482-3809. (Special to Travel Advance)

Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative Update

The federal government may be getting closer to dropping its planned border passport requirement. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative has received a lot of criticism on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border since it was introduced. The plan requires that by 2008, all travelers entering the U.S. carry a passport. Critics say the requirement would be costly to travelers and hurt tourism and trade on both sides of the border. Now, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff says the passport requirement could be scrapped by the end of the year. Chertoff, who met with Canadian officials in Edmonton this week, says officials from both countries are now working on an identification card that would be cheaper and easier to use than a passport. Chertoff said the ID card will make crossing the border attractive and customer-friendly.

(www.PublicBroadcasting.net/wned.com)

The Travel Industry Association (TIA) on Thursday put out an urgent request to its members to contact their elected members of Congress to ask for an extension of the Jan. 1, 2008 deadline of the WHTI. Details at 202-408-2163. (Special to Travel Advance, www.tia.org)

World's Best Awards

Travel + Leisure's August issue presents the results of the magazine's 11th annual poll in which readers name the best airlines, cruise lines, hotels, cities, islands and more. Among the choices: Top hotel in the continental U.S. and Canada - The Phoenician and the Boulders Resort & Golden Door Spa in Arizona. (Page 151, Travel + Leisure, Aug., www.travelandleisure.com)

Regional Roundup: Las Vegas

Recent visitor data shows that Southern Nevada's once white-hot travel industry has cooled this year. The Las Vegas Valley hosted more than 3.34 million visitors in May, down 0.9 percent from May 2005, according to figures released by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. May's total was the third monthly decline in local visitor volume since the start of 2005. Its dip comes on the heels of tepid 0.3 percent growth in both March and April, the same months gasoline prices began to spike throughout the U.S. However, decreased convention attendance was the biggest factor in May's slight decline. (www.LasVegasReview-Journal.com/Business, 7/15)

Arizona Travel: Some Like it Hot

Summer marks the prime tourism season in the eastern stretches of the Mojave Desert, says The New York Times' "Escapes" section. For die-hard heat seekers, triple-digit temperatures or stifling summer humidity aren't cause to flee to the coast or head north. From desert communities in Southern California, Nevada and Arizona, the hottest places in the summer months have their own appeal--lighter crowds, long days, and yes, the heat. There are people who, quite literally, like it hot, says the paper. (Page D1, New York Times)

Vacation Season Extended through Autumn Months

For a growing number of Americans, vacation season no longer ends with Labor Day. Consultant Sabre Airline Solutions says advance airline bookings for the September-November period are up an average 5 percent from this time a year ago. Many in the industry say the increase may reflect more than the effect of a growing U.S. economy. Travel agents across the U.S. are seeing more Americans building travel plans around the advantages of autumn, mainly smaller crowds and better bargains. (Page 1B, USA Today)

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